

Top Tips for the QCF

Grading within the QCF

To grade your qualification within the QCF, you will need two things:

- grading criteria that shows what is required for a unit to be achieved at a particular grade within the relevant qualification
- grading matrix showing the combination of graded units needed to achieve a qualification at a particular grade, e.g. merit or distinction.

The grading criteria and matrix, like the Rules of Combination, are designed by the Awarding Organisation for the purpose of the qualification in question. What follows are points to bear in mind if you are considering grading a qualification.

Why grade a qualification?

- To indicate the differences between candidates in their standards of performance within a QCF level
- To recognise where a candidate may have significantly exceeded the minimum standard required to pass the qualification.
- To provide additional information about the performance of the candidate and the credits achieved

How can grading add value to qualifications?

- Grading can increase an individual's motivation to succeed
- Grades can be helpful to individuals when competing for jobs
- Some employers find grades helpful when selecting between candidates for jobs

How does grading affect the QCF unit?

- The grades must stay within the scope of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria.
- The grades must not encroach on standards required at a higher level but must be contained within the level of the unit.
- Although units are graded, grades for individual candidates are only reported through the qualification awarded.

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How grades can be described

- A grading matrix must include a 'pass' which is the same as the threshold for achievement of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the unit.
- Additional grades must be developed for achievement above this threshold. For example, a 'merit' and/or 'distinction' grade could be awarded. A merit would be awarded for performance above a pass standard and distinction would be awarded for performance above a merit standard.
- The term 'credit' must not be used, as this has a specific meaning within the QCF.

Tips for developing grading criteria:

Grading criteria:

- are written to specify the standard to be met, i.e. the quality and consistency of performance that is above that required to pass the unit. It may be linked to understanding, application or learner autonomy and accountability
- are written in addition to assessment criteria within an individual unit specification
- are specific to the qualification of an Awarding Organisation, including any units that may be shared
- should only apply to mandatory or optional units
- must be consistent with the overall level of the qualification
- should be kept to the minimum required to ensure consistency and reliability of assessment judgements

TOP TIP – keep it simple

There are several ways in which grading can be applied to keep it simple. Here are some options:

- Select the smallest number of units for grading to suit the qualification
- Allocate grades to mandatory units only
- Distribute a small number of graded units across the qualification, some mandatory and some optional
- Develop a single set of grading criteria that can be used in different combinations to achieve several grades

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- Only use grades with units that have similar credit values

How are grades presented?

Grades are presented as a simple set of instructions that set out the conditions by which a candidate can achieve a qualification at a particular grade. This is referred to as the 'grading algorithm' or matrix. Here is an example of a grading matrix:

Combination of graded units	Qualification Grade
4 x Distinction	Distinction
3 x Distinction and 1 x Merit	Distinction
2 x Distinction, 1 Merit and 1 x Pass	Distinction
2 x Distinction and 2 x Pass	Merit
1 x Distinction and 3 x Merit	Merit
1 x Distinction, 2 x Merit and 1 x Pass	Merit
4 x Merit	Merit
1 x Distinction, 1 x Merit and 2 x Pass	Merit
3 x Merit and 1 x Pass	Merit
1 x Distinction and 3 x Pass	Pass
2 x Merit and 2 x Pass	Pass
1 x Merit and 3 x Pass	Pass
4 x Pass	Pass

Getting help...

If you would like to know more about grading, then come to our workshop on grading. You can find out when this and other workshops for unit and qualification development are taking place by visiting <http://www.stratagia.co.uk/>

Visit these websites to access further QCF information and resources:

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- The Ofqual website <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/51.aspx> will give you the latest on the regulatory arrangements for units and qualifications within the QCF, including a list of downloadable resources.
- The Federation of Awarding Bodies (<http://www.awarding.org.uk/public/qcf-capacity-building>) also provides information, resources and contact details of people who can help
- To search for QCF units and qualifications, visit the Register of Regulated Qualifications at <http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit>

We're happy to offer you a FREE initial half hour consultation with one of our credit experts.

Contact us at, 0845 226 1712, info@stratagia.co.uk to discuss how we can help you.